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6 June 1977

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

IMPACT OF THE US STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Initial international skepticism about the seriousness of the Carter administration's commitment to the fostering of human rights was dispelled early this year by presidential statements and US initiatives in bilateral relations and international forums. Suspicion over US motives has persisted, however, and despite recent policy statements by senior US officials there still is some confusion over the lengths to which the US may be prepared to go in pursuit of human rights objectives. This memorandum surveys reaction to the US stand. A regional listing of significant developments is provided at annex.

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Introduction

The US stand on human rights has prompted a number of governments to move toward bettering their human rights performance. This has occurred principally where the regime has been anxious to preserve cooperative relations with the US, has not felt publicly challenged or specifically prodded by Washington, and is relatively confident about its internal security situation.

Even in these cases, however, there has been a notable reluctance to accept the US stand at face value. Public expressions of understanding about US concerns have been matched by private assess-

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ments of Washington's emphasis on human rights as a ploy designed to pressure other countries into comporting themselves in accordance with US policies generally.

Attribution of such ulterior motivation, the connection of human rights to other issues, and a marked propensity to interpret US pronouncements and actions in egocentric terms have been characteristic reactions of countries with the most cause for unease over the US stand. Repressive practices have intensified in some cases, and bilateral relations have suffered in a number of instances.

There is strong public endorsement of the principles that underlie the US stand in some countries, but in many cases it is coupled with considerable worry over the potential for adverse international political consequences. Applause for Washington's espousal of human rights principles, therefore, is not always accompanied by approval of specific US initiatives. The advent of what many foreign observers view as a new element of uncertainty in international affairs has thus affected a broad range of international relationships.

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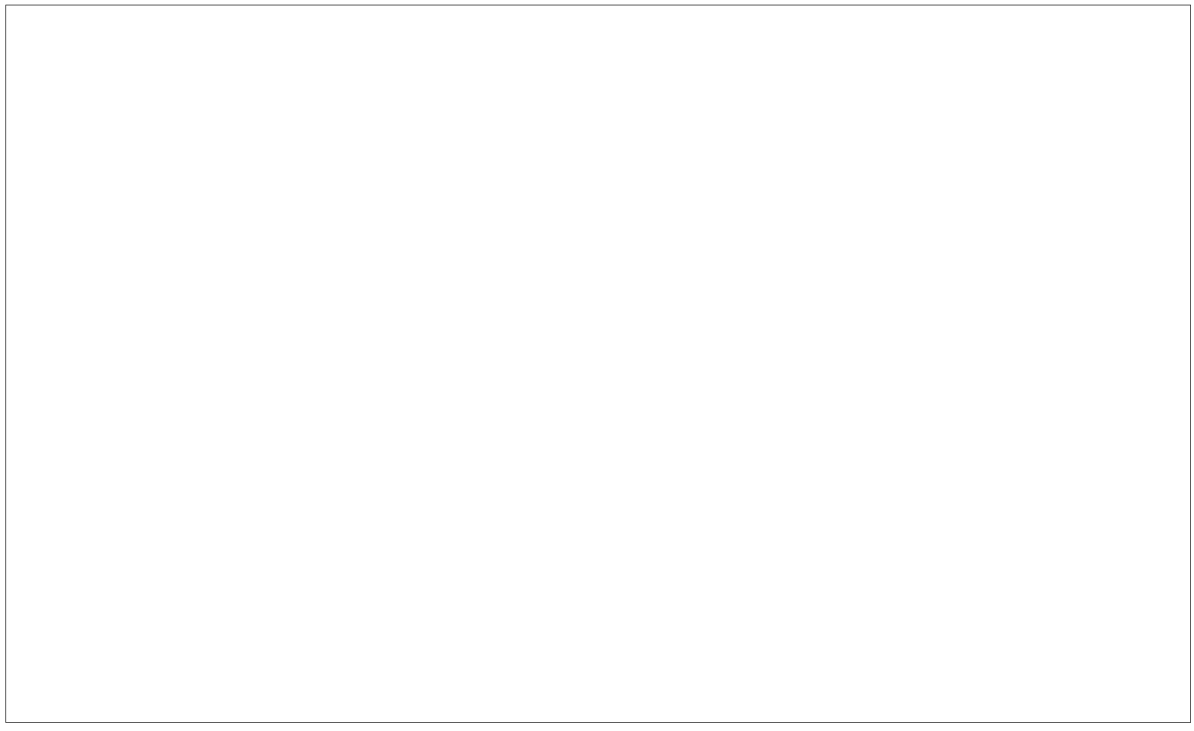

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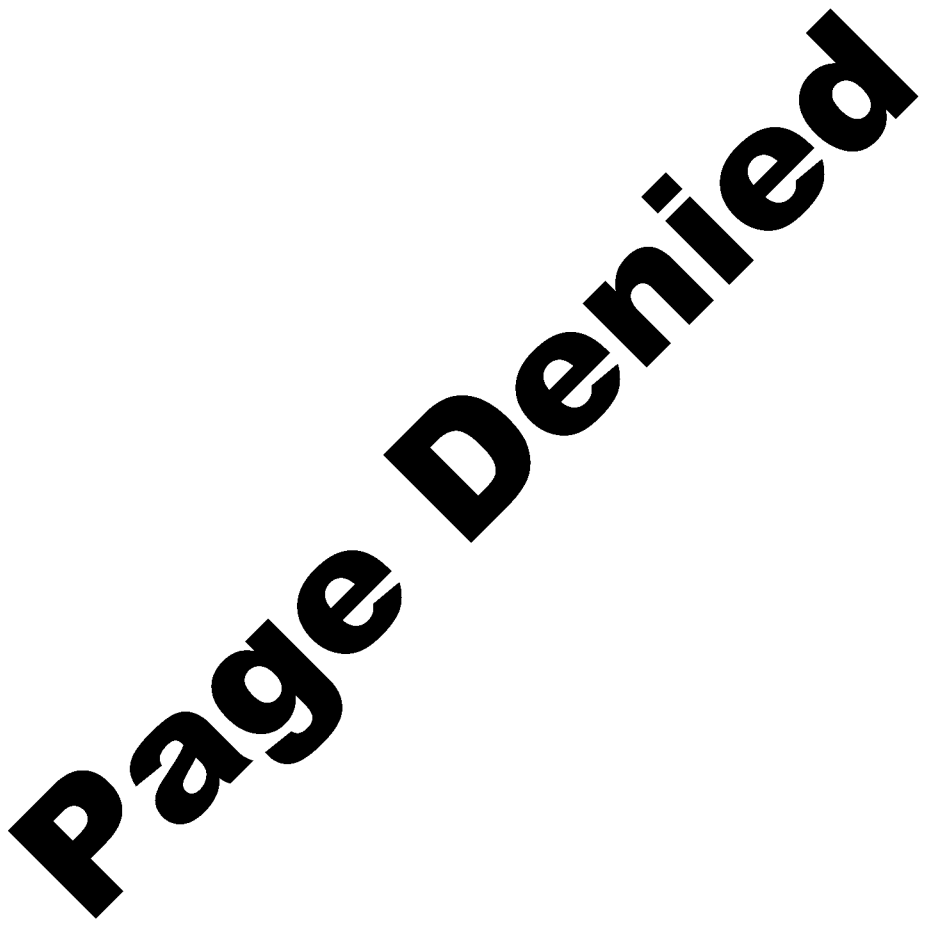

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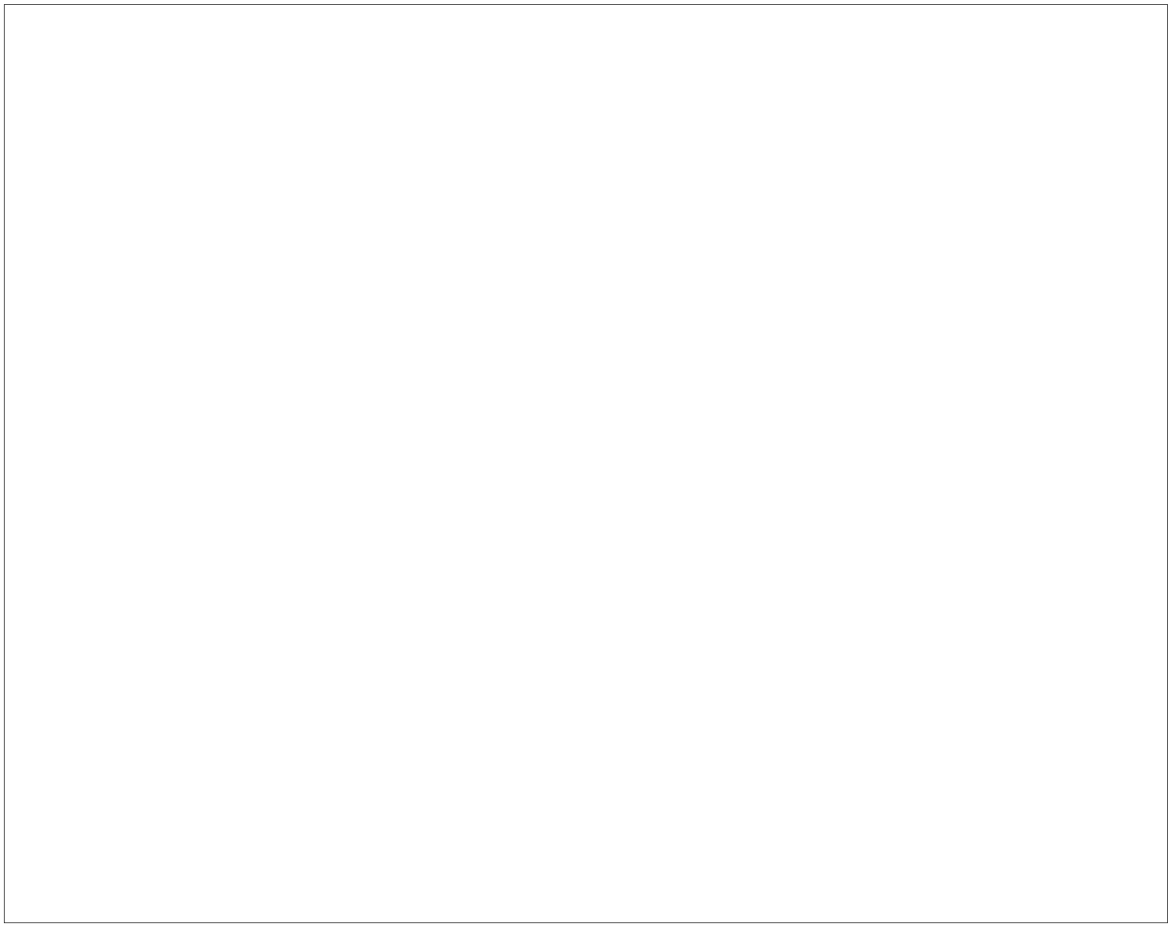

Latin America

US human rights initiatives have aroused considerable resentment in several Central and South American countries ruled by military regimes that have felt directly challenged. They have denounced US statements and actions as unwarranted and unacceptable interference in strictly internal affairs.

Argentina and Uruguay rejected all US military assistance after Washington linked aid cuts to human rights violations in those countries. Brazil, already angered by US pressure to modify its nuclear deal with West Germany, condemned the State Department's preparation of a report on its human rights practices as an affront to its sovereignty and renounced the 1952 military assistance agreement.

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Guatemala and El Salvador also rejected military assistance conditioned on US judgment of their human rights situations.

The Latins are angered by what they regard as US failure to understand and make allowances for their political and internal security problems. The Southern Cone military regimes, especially, are convinced that their countries' experiences with political disintegration, insurgency, and terrorism fully warrant tough internal security measures. The Argentines, for example, insist that they will not deviate from the practices they deem indispensable in their continuing war with leftist terrorists no matter what outside criticism they incur.

The Latins are also resentful over the fact that they were not considered important enough to US interests to be treated specially (like South Korea). They have questioned US qualifications for making international moral judgments and have voiced suspicion that the US has ulterior motives for its human rights stand. The latter view is particularly strong in Brazil, where the human rights issue is viewed as an adjunct to US pressure on nuclear matters.

The Southern Cone regimes have been commiserating with each other, and they may be considering joint moves to convince the US that it has seriously underestimated the costs of alienating them. The Latins undoubtedly would prefer to forgo polemics and halt any deterioration in their relations with Washington. But the military regimes are determined not to take any actions that could be construed as caving in to US pressure.

Latin reaction to the US stand has not, of course, been entirely negative. Venezuela and Costa Rica, two of Latin America's few remaining democracies, have strongly endorsed US initiatives, and expressions of support for the US stand have also been forthcoming from Mexico and Bolivia. Prisoner releases in Paraguay and Peru were directly responsive to US concerns.

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Prospects

The impact that US human rights initiatives will have over the next several months will depend in large part on how the US chooses to press the issue. Protestations as to the universality of US concerns are unlikely to dissuade most governments vulnerable on the issue from continuing to interpret even general US actions or pronouncements as being directed particularly at them.

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Some of the other countries that have reacted negatively to US human rights initiatives seem to be rethinking their positions. They are also hoping for a "cooling off" period that would permit a resumption of less antagonistic bilateral relations and allow the development of strategies for coping with the new situation. This is especially the case in Latin America, where there is a feeling that the US is in the process of moderating its tactics for pursuing human rights objectives. Disappointment of such

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expectations would give added impetus to discussions among the Southern Cone countries about convincing the US that they are vitally important to its interest.

Criticism of alleged US disinterest in the world wide advancement of social and economic justice is likely to increase if the less developed countries conclude that the US plans to link human rights to international economic issues by seeking to further its human rights objectives in international financial institutions whose charters call for loan decisions to be made strictly on the basis of economic considerations. The "North-South" dialogue, moreover, could become considerably more contentious generally if controversy over human rights were to severely damage US relations with nations (like Brazil) that have played significant moderating roles in the articulation of LDC demands.

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SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE US STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS

LATIN AMERICA

JANUARY

27 Three members of Paraguayan communist party are released after spending almost 20 years each in prison.

28 Political rights are restored to eight persons in Uruguay.

FEBRUARY

10 Eleven women and their 17 children are released from a Paraguayan detention facility for political prisoners.

28 Argentina and Uruguay reject US military assistance tied to their human rights performance.

A state of siege is imposed in El Salvador following demonstrations protesting fradulent presidential elections.

MARCH

3 Brazil rejects all US military assistance for fiscal year 1977.

11 Brazilian President Geisel renounces the military assistance agreement with the US that was signed in 1952. The decision follows publication of the State Department's report on human rights.

The Guatemalan government notifies the US that it declines in advance any US military assistance conditioned on US judgment of Guatemala's human rights practices.

11 Venezuelan President Perez praises President Carter's human rights initiatives in a major address to his country's congress.

Sixty-four additional Paraguayan political prisoners are released.

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MARCH

12 Chilean President Pinochet dissolves remaining political parties and strengthens sanctions against all partisan political activity.

15 In a press conference Colombian President Lopez supports the promotion of human rights through an international entity and declares Colombia's opposition to interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

17 El Salvador rejects US military assistance.

APRIL

1 President Geisel suspends the Brazilian legislature for two weeks in response to its veto of a government amendment to reform the judiciary.

6 Nicaragua describes the US decision to link its military aid to human rights conditions as "interference in the internal affairs of Nicaragua."

11 Mexico announces that it has stopped legal proceedings against 424 persons charged with political crimes and declares that there are no more political prisoners in Mexico.

15 The Paraguayan government refuses to grant formal safe conduct out of the country to three communist party members released in January, who have been in asylum in the Peruvian Embassy since 25 February. The government claims they are not wanted for arrest and therefore are free to go.

15 Brazilian President Geisel issues a series of decrees aimed at reducing the influence of civilian politicians in the government.

25 Peru extends the emergency suspension of civil guarantees another 30 days; these measures went into effect after street demonstrations last July.

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APRIL

26 Peruvian President Morales Bermudez announces amnesty for 314 persons, including several political prisoners.

28 The Archbishop of Asuncion comments favorably on Paraguay's human rights progress. He has previously been highly critical of the government on the issue.

MAY

3 The pro-government press in Nicaragua praises Secretary Vance's Law Day Speech.

16 The Argentine Catholic Church issues its first formal criticism of the government's antisubversive campaign. The Church warns that government repression ultimately will prove counterproductive.

20 Brazil's nominal opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement, forms a permanent advisory commission on human rights to monitor reports of violations.

22 El Salvador's President Molina charges that leftist priests are involved in subversive activities. He denies accusations that his government is persecuting the Catholic Church.

JUNE

1 Panama's General Torrijos pardons several women serving prison sentences for subversion and announces that some political exiles will be allowed to return.

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